

**Minutes
of the
SECOND MEETING
of the
RADIOACTIVE AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS COMMITTEE**

**July 6, 2004
Los Alamos Research Park Main Conference Center
Los Alamos**

The second meeting of the Radioactive and Hazardous Materials Committee was called to order at 10:15 a.m. on Tuesday, July 6, 2004, by Representative John A. Heaton, chair.

PRESENT

Rep. John A. Heaton, chair
Sen. Richard C. Martinez, vice chair
Sen. Mary Jane M. Garcia
Sen. Gay G. Kernan
Rep. Manuel G. Herrera
Sen. Carroll H. Leavell
Rep. Antonio Lujan
Rep. Pauline J. Ponce
Rep. Jeannette O. Wallace

ABSENT

Rep. Donald E. Bratton
Sen. Phil A. Griego
Sen. Don Kidd

Advisory Members

Rep. Thomas A. Anderson

Sen. Clinton D. Harden, Jr.
Sen. William H. Payne
Sen. John Pinto
Rep. Avon W. Wilson

Staff

Gordon Meeks
Jeret Fleetwood

Guests

The guest list is in the original meeting file.

Tuesday, July 6, 2004

Representative Wallace introduced Jim West, a member of the Los Alamos County Commission, and Rick Brake, director of operations at Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL). Mr. West welcomed the committee to Los Alamos, noting that an informed public is a more confident one. Mr. Brake also welcomed the committee, noting that Director Pete Nanos could not attend and thanked the committee members for coming.

Representative Wallace also provided the committee with a brief history of the Los Alamos Research Park, noting that it was not LANL property but did include some partnerships

between the laboratory and private industry.

Representative Heaton had members of the committee and members of the audience introduce themselves.

Update on Agreement with the New Mexico Department of Environment

Beverly Ramsey, director of the Risk Reduction and Environmental Stewardship Division at LANL, and Joe Vozella, Department of Energy, provided the committee with a progress report regarding the agreement between the Department of Energy (DOE) and the New Mexico Department of Environment (NMED). They explained that a 270-page draft of the order has been compiled and is under review by the DOE and provided a time line for finalization of the order.

In response to questions from legislators, Mr. Vozella and Ms. Ramsey estimated that a draft of the agreement could be available for public viewing as soon as August 1 and that the agreement could be finalized by early 2005.

Ms. Ramsey also discussed LANL's work on environmental cleanup. She explained that laboratory staff has already been working diligently on many of the items contained in a corrective action order, rather than waiting for signatures on the order to finalize it. She also noted that the laboratory is in the process of implementing an environmental management system designed to reduce costs to the laboratory for corrective action by placing an emphasis on prevention of many of the issues contained in the corrective action order.

Pit Production

Jim Ostic, acting project leader of the pit production program at LANL, provided the committee with an overview and a status report of the program. He explained that pits are a part of the core of nuclear weapons and that questions about the reliability of pits over 40 years old have prompted federal authorities to begin production of a limited number of pits. Mr. Ostic went on to note that LANL has re-established the nation's ability to produce pits and that the laboratory is making the transition to being able to manufacture pits in small lots.

Mr. Ostic also outlined the number of pits LANL will try to produce over the next few years, noting that Congress is currently debating exactly how many pits are needed. He also explained that robust manufacturing of pits is the goal of the program and that LANL science and technology will lead to improvements in that process.

In response to questions from the committee, Mr. Ostic explained that LANL is the only facility in the United States currently manufacturing pits, that the amount of waste produced per pit manufactured is slowly being reduced and that the transuranic waste resulting from pit production is due to be shipped to WIPP.

Public Comment

Joni Arends, representing Concerned Citizens for Nuclear Safety, was recognized by the chair. Ms. Arends told the committee that inadequate information is being released to the committee. She cited mismanagement of perchlorates and waste water, the relationship between LANL and WIPP and the developers of the uranium enrichment facility near Hobbs.

Wildfire Modeling Demonstration and Briefing

Rod Linn, primary investigator for the wildfire modeling program at LANL, provided the committee with a demonstration of the wildfire modeling program being developed at the laboratory. He explained that predicting wildfire behavior is a complex problem with many interrelated variables, such as the type of fuels, weather, topography and physics. Mr. Linn also noted that the program is very useful for examining how and why a past fire behaved the way it did or for predicting what kind of forest management techniques will yield the best resistance to large fires, but not very useful for predicting how a fire that has already begun burning will behave. He explained that the computer models take too long to render to be of much use in those situations and that the forest service uses another formula that is relatively effective for such purposes.

Mr. Linn showed the committee computer-generated models of several fires to show how complex variables can change a fire's behavior. He also noted that some elements of the fire modeling program have proven useful for determining the dispersion of explosive or dangerous materials, such as so-called dirty bombs, into the air.

Department of Energy Citizens Advisory Board

Tim DeLong, chair of the Northern New Mexico Citizens Advisory Board (NNMCAB), provided the committee with an overview of the purpose and history of Department of Energy Citizens Advisory Boards, noting the importance of citizen involvement in DOE decisions. He also outlined the mission of the NNMCAB, emphasizing its goal of providing advice and recommendations to the DOE resulting from meaningful dialogue among the multicultural communities of northern New Mexico. Mr. DeLong also discussed several of the current topics NNMCAB is involved in, including NMED's corrective action order, changes in characterization of waste being transported to WIPP and material disposal areas at LANL.

Finally, Mr. DeLong discussed ways for members of the public to become involved with NNMCAB.

The committee approved without objection and motion by the chair to send a letter to the DOE to register concern over the delay of shipments from Los Alamos to WIPP.

The committee also approved without objection the minutes of the previous meeting.

Tour of Emergency Operations Center

LANL provided members of the committee with a tour of the new Emergency Operations Center. The center features secure and nonsecure areas and is the culmination of lessons learned

from the Cerro Grande fire. It features state-of-the-art communications equipment, vehicles and an emergency dispatch area, plus the capability to be sealed for up to three hours with 120 people inside. It also has enough water and electricity to remain self-sufficient for several days. Center operators also noted that the center is located outside any potential areas of concern for a number of potential crises.

The committee adjourned at 4:00 p.m.